

AUDIT & GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE – 13 JANUARY 2016

REPORT ON THE DEMOGRAPHY OF THE COUNCIL

Report by Chief Legal Officer and Monitoring Officer

Introduction

1. In December 2014, Council received a report from the Independent Remuneration Panel on councillors' allowances. During the debate on that item, Council endorsed the Panel's view that overcoming obstacles to wider democratic representation required solutions other than simply revised allowances.
2. Council therefore asked this Committee to develop potential actions that this Council could take that might encourage a wider demographic representation from the May 2017 elections onwards. The Committee established a cross-party Councillor Profile Working Group comprising Councillors Hards, Bartholomew and Constance to consider overcoming the obstacles and the potential options which may encourage greater diversity of representation.
3. The Group's findings and the feedback received from fellow members of Council, have led the Group to confirm that the main obstacles preventing people coming forward to stand as members are:
 - a. the conflicting demands on time caused by the pressures of the role, family life and work patterns;
 - b. difficulties in physically accessing meetings within Oxford City centre;
 - c. difficulties in obtaining the support needed from employers to enable elected members to carry out the role of councillor effectively;
 - d. difficulties in ensuring that members are supported in their role as carers, thus freeing up time to attend meetings;
 - e. the stereotypical conception of councillors is not encouraging younger candidates to come forward.
4. The Group's findings and recommendation are contained in their final report which is attached as Annex 1 to this item. The Committee is asked to consider the Group's report with a view to endorsing the actions recommended at paragraph 17 of it to help achieve a greater diversity of representation.

Legal and Financial Implications

5. There are no legal and financial implications in respect of this report.

RECOMMENDATION

- 6. The Councillor Profile Working Group RECOMMENDS the Committee to consider its report (Annex 1) and to consider adopting the actions itemised at paragraph 17 of it.**

NICK GRAHAM

Chief Legal Officer and Monitoring Officer

Background papers: Nil
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